Syllabus – GOVT 2306  
INSTRUCTOR: Kevin Jefferies  
OFFICE LOCATION: Houston Community College Stafford Campus   
Room:   
Phone:   
E-mail: [kevin.jefferies@hccs.edu](mailto:kevin.jefferies@hccs.edu)  
Blog: http://theweakerparty.blogspot.com/  
Wiki: http://theweakerparty.wikispaces.com/The+Weaker+Party  
  
Texas Government 2306 – 0013 - 13374  
3 semester credit hours  
48 contact hours   
  
January 17 – May 14  
  
**OFFICE HOURS:** I am available immediately before and after class. Please note that I am an adjunct instructor and do not have an office on campus, but I am readily available through email. Students are encouraged to schedule their meetings--phone and face-to face. E-mails and phone calls made after business hours will be returned the following business day. Please remember to leave a voice message if you call and clearly identify yourself (name, course name and number and the nature of your call).   
  
**LEARNING WEB:** http://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/kevin.jefferies  
   
**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Government 2306 focuses on the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and intergovernmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

**COREQUISITES:** Students in Texas Government 2306 must be placed into college-level reading and college-level writing.   
  
**COURSE GOALS:** This course is designed to provide students with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the structure, workings and practices of government at the state level. Additionally, the course is designed to help students develop the necessary intellectual skills to examine and critically evaluate the impact of government to society and understand how they can effectively engage in and influence the policy making process.   
  
**CORE OBJECTIVES:** The Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) mandates that the core curriculum must ensure that students will develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in life. Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning. Students enrolled in GOVT 2305/2306 core curriculum courses will complete assessments designed to measure the following core objectives:   
  
**- Critical Thinking Skills:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information   
**- Communication Skills:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication   
**- Personal Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making  
**- Social Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making   
  
Student assessment of proficiencies mandated by THECB may include testing, projects, or assignments.   
  
**Government Program Student Learning Outcomes**.   
  
*1. Identify and describe the institutions of American national government. GOVT 2305.   
2. Identify and describe the institutions of the State of Texas government. GOVT 2306.  
3. Identify and evaluate information sources for political news, data, and opinion. GOVT 2306.   
4. Analyze the effects of the historical, social, political, economic, and cultural forces on politics and government. GOVT 2306  
5. Recognize and assume the responsibilities of citizenship by developing one’s critical thinking skills, engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media. GOVT 2305*  
  
**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**: As your instructor, I am committed to helping each of you achieve your academic goals. It is my responsibility to provide each student with a firm foundation of knowledge related to Texas government. This is a lecture course. Instruction includes the use of lecture materials, collaborative activities in the classroom, on-line interactive exercises and other supplemental resources as provided by the instructor.   
  
Additionally, discussion will be an important aspect of the course. It is my belief that discourse helps students move beyond memorization of the material and into critical analysis and evaluation of the concepts and theories examined in the course. You will be involved in discussions with your classmates and your instructor. In order to contribute to these discussions, you will need to stay prepared by following the reading schedule, attending class regularly, submitting assignments on time, taking advantage of the supplemental resources provided by the instructor (including any enrichment exercises) and fully participating in every aspect of the course.   
  
**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** *Maxwell “Texas Politics Today” 17e 2016 (ISBN 9781285853130)*   
  
*As you know, textbooks may often be found online through other vendors. However, if you exercise this option, please make sure you purchase the correct edition. You will need your textbook in a timely manner.*   
  
**USING THE TEXTBOOK**: It is important that you follow the reading schedule. While it may be tempting, do not fall behind on your reading or wait until right before a test to study. To avoid becoming overwhelmed with the material, pace yourself by maintaining the reading schedule as printed. The textbook is complementary to the supplemental readings, assignments and your personal note taking. Ensure your personal success in the course by staying prepared and engaged!  
  
**Course Calendar**   
  
January 17 – May 14  
  
Week One: January 18 – 23  
- Chapter One: Texas Culture and Diversity  
  
Week Two: January 23 – 30  
- Chapter Two: Texas in the Federal System  
  
Week Three: January 30 - February 6  
- Chapter Three: The Texas Constitution in Perspective  
  
Week Four: February 6 – 13  
- Chapter Four: Voting and Elections  
   
Week Five: February 13 – 20  
**- Review and Test One**  
  
Week Six: February 20 - 27   
- Chapter Five: Political Parties  
  
Week Seven: February 27 – March 6  
- Chapter Six: Interest Groups  
  
Week Eight: March 6 – 10  
- Chapter Seven: The Legislature  
  
SPRING BREAK Week of March 10 – 20

Week Nine: March 20 – 27   
- Chapter Eight: The Texas Executive Branch  
  
Week Ten: March 27 – April 3  
**- Review and Test Two**

Week Eleven: April 3 – 10  
- Chapter Nine: The Judiciary  
  
Week Twelve: April 10 – 17  
- Chapter Ten: Law and Due Process  
  
Week Thirteen: April 17 - 21  
- Chapter Eleven: Local Government  
  
Week Fourteen: April 24 – 28   
- Chapter Twelve: Public Policy in Texas  
  
Week Fifteen: May 1 – 5  
**- Review and Test Three**

Week Sixteen: May 8 – 12  
- Review  
- Paper Due May 12  
- Final Exam (probably) May 12  
  
**ASSESSMENTS**   
  
You will be evaluated in three ways in this class:   
- Daily Quizzes  
- 3 Tests  
- A Final Exam  
- a 1000 word paper  
Each is worth 1/4thof your grade  
  
**Quizzes:** At the beginning of each class you will be given a quiz on the material that we will cover that class period. This is to reinforce the idea that you should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned written material. These will very short and will – more often than not – be composed of five multiple choice questions. The average of all these quizzes will be worth 25% of your grade.  
  
**Tests:** Tests are worth 100 points each and will consist of multiple-choice questions. Each exam assesses understanding of material covered in the corresponding section. The final will also include comprehensive questions. The average of all these tests will be worth 25% of your grade.  
  
**Final Exam**: This will also be a multiple choice test with 100 questions, but it will be comprehensive. Any items we cover during the week could potentially be on the test.  
  
**1000 Word Critical Essay**: In order to improve your written communications skills – one of the four skills listed above – I want you to develop a topic and write a 1000 word essay on it. Here is the assigned topic – I want you to do the same one so we all have something fruitful to talk about in class.  
  
*You are hopefully aware that it is election season. Among other things, we (the electorate anyway) will be voting for members of the Texas House and Senate. The primary season – candidates were selected in March - is over. The general election is now upon us. Later this semester we will discuss how the primary election is the more competitive of the two. Gerrymandered districts tend to lead to uncompetitive general election – with few exceptions, we largely know which candidates for Texas races will win this November.   
  
Elections are often fought over what issues will dominate the next session of the Texas Legislature – which will be the 85th time they have met since statehood. I want you to do some research and determine what topics are likely to dominate the next session. These are also topics that will dominate the campaign as it heats up. At the moment, most attention is focused on the national race, but the state races will heat up soon. See what policies candidates are running on. How might the results of the upcoming election determine what items dominate the legislative agenda?*   
  
Please use at least 3 references and use an appropriate format – like MLA – for the paper.  
  
This will also be worth 25% of your final grade.

**GRADING SCALE**:   
  
90-100 = A   
80-89.9= B   
70-79.9= C   
60-69.9= D   
0-59.9= F   
  
**LATE SUBMISSION/MAKE-UP POLICY:**   
  
**Quizzes:** There will be NO make-ups for quizzes or Written Assignments (no exceptions). The quizzes also serve as the class roll, so please make every effort to regularly attend class and to arrive on time. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades. I will not drop low written assignment grades.  
  
**Tests:** The instructor reserves the right to determine the legitimacy of a student’s excuse for missing a test. If a make-up test is granted, the test may consist largely of essay questions. There will be no exceptions to this policy. I strongly discourage missing a test. Additionally, all makeup exams will be administered the last week of regular instruction. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor about a missed exam.   
  
**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA STATEMENT):** Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office (713-718-5422) at the respective college at the beginning of each semester. Faculty is authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office. For questions, please contact Donna Price (District) at 713.718.5165 or one of the Disability Counselor at Northwest College, Dr. LaRonda Ashford at (713) 718-5408 or Lisa Parkinson M.Ed. at (713) 718-5422. To visit the ADA Web site, please visit: www.hccs.edu then click “Future students,” scroll down the page and click on the words Disability Information.   
  
**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION:** I will follow HCC policy for any and all academic dishonesty, plagiarism and collusion. Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will result in a zero (F) for that particular graded activity. You may also receive a grade of (F) for the course. Identified instances of cheating will also be reported to the college and could result in administrative withdrawal. Please note that you will not be allowed to leave the classroom during the testing process.   
  
Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating on a test includes copying from another student's test paper; using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; collaborating with another student during a test without authority; knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test; or bribing another person to obtain a test that is to be administered. ‘Plagiarism’ means the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work for credit. ‘Collusion’ means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit."   
  
For further clarification on what is considered academic dishonesty and/or cheating, in simplified terms it is (1) taking unchanged passages (or slightly edited) from another person's writing and portraying them as one's own; (2) submitting a paper that includes paraphrases of another person's writing without giving credit; (3) having someone else write your paper for you; (4) copying or using another person's work during in-class writing or testing; (5) the unauthorized use of electronic devices during in-class writing or testing; and (6) violating testing rules. Keep in mind also that whether you are cheating or not, not following testing or writing rules properly, such as communicating with your neighbor or using a cell phone during a test will be construed as cheating. This is not an exhaustive list of the forms of cheating on written work. If you are in doubt, consult your instructor.”).   
  
**CLASS ATTENDANCE AND HCC COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY** Attending class regularly is the best way to succeed in the course. Research has shown that the single most important factor in student success is attendance. Simply put, going to class greatly increases your ability to succeed. You are expected to attend class regularly. You are also responsible for materials covered during your absences. Class attendance is checked daily. Although it is your responsibility to drop a course for non-attendance, the instructor has the authority to drop you for excessive absences. I reserve the right to withdraw students for low or no attendance.   
  
If you feel that you cannot complete this course, you will need to withdraw from the course prior to the final date of withdrawal. HCC policy provides that students may be dropped by the instructor after missing more than six hours of class time. If you don’t attend class and fail to withdraw from the course by the deadline, you will receive a grade in the course. For students who fail the course due to excessive absences a special grade will be assigned (see Non Attendance and Failure to Withdraw Policy for details).   
  
The last day that you may be withdrawn from the course is Friday, October 30. After this date, you will receive a grade (not a W) in the course.   
  
**NON ATTENDANCE AND FAILURE TO WITHDRAW** If you do not attend class (actively engage in the course) and fail to withdraw by the deadline, you will receive a grade of “FX” in the course. A grade of “FX” is failure due to lack of attendance, which is a distinction from an “earned” grade of “F”--failure due to poor performance. Students who withdraw by the deadline will receive a “W” in the course instead of a grade.   
  
**ADDITIONAL REQUIRED WITHDRAWAL POLICY (STATE OF TEXAS POLICY)** Students who take a course for the third time or more must now pay significant tuition/fee increases at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities. At HCC it is an additional $50 per credit hour. If you are considering course withdrawal because you are not earning passing grades, confer with your instructor/counselor as early as possible about your study habits, reading and writing homework, test-taking skills, attendance, course participation, and opportunities for tutoring or other assistance that might be available. Also, the state of Texas has passed a new law limiting new students (as of Fall 2007) to no more than six withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree.   
  
**HOW TO DROP**   
  
•If a student decides to withdraw from a class upon careful review of other options, the student can withdraw online prior to the deadline through their HCC Student Center.   
•HCC and/or professors may withdraw students for excessive absences without notification (see Class Attendance below).   
•Students should check HCC’s Academic Calendar by Term for withdrawal dates and deadlines. Classes of other duration (flex-entry, 8-weeks, etc.) may have different final withdrawal deadlines. Please contact the HCC Registrar’s Office at 713.718.8500 to determine mini-term class withdrawal deadlines.   
  
**IMPORTANT:** Students are now able to withdraw from one or more of their classes online. While it is still advisable that student receive good counsel from instructional and counseling faculty prior to dropping one or more classes, students will no longer be required to “see” someone before they will be allowed to drop. They will be provided information related to the implications and possible consequences of dropping their courses. The following will occur when a student selects the “drop” option during an enrollment request:   
  
• Students will be required to select a drop reason in order to complete the withdrawal request (the drop reason will cue whether the dropped course will count toward the 6 drop rule or not).   
• Students will be invited to click on several links to learn more of the implications of dropping on the six-drop rule (on veterans, on financial aid, and on international students): (http:// imc02.hccs.edu/gcac/drop.htm).   
• Students will be required to acknowledge the implications of withdrawing from a class. The last day for an administrative /student withdrawal is: Friday, October 30.   
  
**HCC EARLY ALERT The HCC** Early Alert Initiative is a college-wide effort to successfully retain students who are at risk of failing, withdrawing or dropping a course. This joint effort between Instruction and Student Services identifies students that are performing poorly in the classroom so that effective support services can be provided to the student.   
  
**PERFORMANCE EARLY INTERVENTION** I am committed to helping you achieve your academic goals. If you find that you are not performing at a level you are pleased with, it is vitally important that you make every effort possible to seek assistance. Failing even one test may be detrimental to your final grade. If you do not perform well on the first exam, or you find that your quiz/assignment scores are weak, please see me immediately! Do not wait until the week before the final exam to turn things around!   
  
**CLASSROOM CONDUCT**: It is our shared responsibility to develop and maintain a positive learning environment for everyone. Adult behavior is expected. Disruptive behavior/ activities which interfere with teaching and/or learning will not be tolerated, and may result in an administrative withdrawal without refund.   
  
ALL electronic devices are to be turned completely off (see signs in classroom) during instruction. Note that “off” does not mean on vibrate. Please remember that ringing and buzzing phones and other devices are a disruption and interfere with the ability of others to learn. Additionally, please limit your use of laptops in the classroom for note taking purposes only. If your use of a laptop becomes disruptive to the learning environment, you will be asked to cease further use. Use of recording devices, including camera phones and tape recorders, is prohibited in classrooms, laboratories, faculty offices, and other locations where instruction, tutoring, or testing occurs. Students with disabilities who need to use a recording device as a reasonable accommodation should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities for more information.   
  
**INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS** As your Instructor, it is my responsibility to:   
♦ provide the grading scale and detailed grading formula explaining how student grades are to be derived;   
♦ facilitate an effective learning environment through class activities, discussions, and lectures;   
♦ inform you of any special projects or assignments Inform students of policies such as attendance, withdrawal, tardiness and make up;   
♦ provide the course outline and class calendar which will include a description of any special projects or assignments; and   
♦ arrange to meet with individual students before and after class as required.   
  
**To be successful in this class, it is the student’s responsibility to**:   
♦ attend class and participate in class discussions and activities;   
♦ read and comprehend the textbook;   
♦ complete the required assignments and exams: Ask for help when there is a question or problem; and ♦ keep copies of all paperwork, including this syllabus, handouts and all assignments.   
  
**DISCIPLINE REQUIREMENT** Essential to the learning process in the social sciences disciplines is writing at the college level, meaning having the ability to produce clear, correct and coherent prose, adapted to purpose, occasion and audience. This includes not only grammar, spelling and punctuation, but the writing process itself. All graded assessments (in their totality) will meet and/or exceed this discipline requirement. \*\*The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point during the summer. Students will be notified of any changes. \*\*